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Media Literacy: How the Era of Fake News
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Storytelling: For Public Organizations

Jeffrey Valcin
University of Central Florida

Brittany Wilson
University of Central Florida

Vivian Miley
University of Central Florida

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Media Literacy Guide- Storytelling PA (**Final Submission**)

Jeffrey Valcin, Brittany Wilson, Vivian Miley

University of Central Florida- PAD 6705

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Introduction

By definition, storytelling is just that – one who tells or writes stories (Dictionary.com, 2018). Why is this an important aspect in the public sector? Simply because it is universal. Stories are generated on a daily basis from government employees, politicians, citizens, and, of course, the media outlets (Van Hulst, 2014). While the end result of each story may vary, it is critical that as an individual or organization in the public sector you have the tools and support to not only share your own story, but to do it in the most effective manner possible. A quote attributable to Professor Howard Gardner from Harvard states, “Stories are the single most powerful weapon in a leader’s arsenal” (Sharing Local Agencies' Stories, 2011).

In today’s society the term “Open Government” is deemed as a rite of passage to the general population. With the amount of public sector data accessible on the internet or through avenues such as a public records request, an individual or news outlet has the ability to almost instantaneously gather, analyze and generate their own interpretation of information. An unintended consequence of this access is that those same individuals and/or news outlets pen their own version of an organization’s story. When these instances occur, it is incumbent on the public sector and citizens to take into account the old adage of Paul Harvey to either communicate or identify, “The Rest of the Story” (NPR, 2014). It is inevitable that sooner or later information will be made available to the public regarding government actions or issues, so it is important to understand the importance of how to craft and share your own story.

History and Evolution of Storytelling

The rapid advancement in technology continues to transform how the public sector communicates information, and the immediate connection to individuals. A Time article

recently discussed how public sector communication, both domestic and international, has evolved from government-to-government into people-to-people (Aharoni, 2015). During Benjamin Franklin's time as a U.S. Ambassador in Paris, it would take up to six months to relay information back to the United States on specific actions and issues; fast forwarding to today, the general public and elected officials have information available to them instantaneously through both print and electronic mediums (Aharoni, 2015). The key to this current time period is engaging your audience, and providing them with the information necessary to decipher fact from fiction.

A prime example of the progression of audience engagement is the President of The United States communicating with the American public. Between 1939 and 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered more than 30 radio broadcasts to the public. It was estimated during this time that 90% of American households owned a radio which served as a critical communication tool. These one-way broadcasts, later coined fireside chats, were made during some of the most tumultuous times in our country's history; topics addressed included the bank crisis, unemployment and World War II (Staff, 2010). Americans embraced the chats which boosted their confidence and resulted in a perceived direct connection to the President on a personal level, even though it was not a reciprocal form of communication. Since President Roosevelt's fireside chats, it is arguably difficult to identify a period in time when communication was ongoing directly between a president and their constituency until President Trump's use of Twitter. President Trump has gained international attention through his use of Twitter to communicate directly and instantaneously to the public. While this activity has generated varying levels of criticism and support, it is a key element to the evolution of storytelling. Not only has technology advanced, but the ability to provide reciprocal

communication is now available. Just as quickly as information is tweeted out to the public, the public has the opportunity to provide a rebuttal in support or opposition. The widespread information shared elevates understanding the importance of telling your story in the most effective, efficient and factual manner possible.

Importance

The fundamental aspect of crafting and sharing stories in the public sector is about developing information that will benefit the public. When information is provided, it gives access to documents and other actions that the public needs to be aware of. Storytelling affords the public sector with the ability to connect government actions with their mission, goals and values.

Public agencies craft and share stories to improve their strategic decision making to help send a message of who they are, and why they are so unique. They also have the opportunity to link common interests with the public and within their own continually evolving organizations. More often than not, an individual's perception is their reality so providing information first hand increases the opportunity to gain favorable public opinion. The art of storytelling should be distinctly bifurcated from the concept of a narrative; stories are generally used as a subordinate to illustrate specific positions in the context of a supreme narrative (Orr & Bennett, 2016). An example would be the use of stories to either support or challenge a global issue such as increasing property taxes to alleviate a revenue shortfall.

An important concept that has developed in public sector communications in the last century is public diplomacy. While the application is typically attributed to international relations, it plays an important role in shaping how a government shares their story (Hopkins, 2015). An excerpt taken directly from the U.S. Department of State's website provides that,

“The mission of American public diplomacy is to support the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, advance national interests, and enhance national security by informing and influencing foreign publics and by expanding and strengthening the relationship between the people and Government of the United States and citizens of the rest of the world” (State, 2018).

Based on this platform, an area of focus that has been researched is the difference between public relations, propaganda, and public diplomacy; this debate extends to every level of government relative to the content and method of communicating with the public (Hopkins, 2015). The mission developed by the U.S. Department of State could easily be modified to reflect the ultimate goal of a local government trying to reach their audience by, “informing and influencing them”.

These key factors related to storytelling that will be further evaluated which include how to craft information effectively, identifying your audience and practical applications and information outlets.

How to Tell Your Story

This section is about how agencies craft and share their stories to gain support from the public to help create an effective practice and policy. Public agencies usually plan and formulate courses into a keynote to have rational control of their organization. Public agencies also will craft their work by looking at a competitor’s marketing strategy to determine their weaknesses and strengths. There are various forms of communication that range from social media to networking channels that agencies will use to broadcast the main theme they are seeking.

Public agencies share stories with vast amounts of information to engage the audience that they want to hear the topic. It is important for public agencies to craft and share stories since

it helps them take quantum leaps into the future for a new uprising. Disclosing the story to craft ideal innovation can give a sense of disbelief of those that are trying to build the fabric of society. It is important to share information because any crafted work will allow the public to gain insight on what is being done from a community, environment, and societal standpoint. When agencies highlight their work, and share it with the public it provides extra advantages, making things much simpler to communicate.

Agencies craft and share stories by adapting a translation and trend that other companies would want. Solutions are made to keep aware of new ideal objectives that are based off communication guides that each market or agency can use. Advertisement also plays a key role in this scenario, as it can be applied to any campaign, media outlet, company, product, and organization. Agencies will also tend to be a lot more competitive to dominate their market share. Agencies will also use combinations of marketing techniques to craft their work through digital technology.

Innovative solutions that come to mind can change a whole perspective on an agency, and will revert the energy of other organizations to follow their flow of trend. In order to craft you have to embrace what you create to turn it into something that has never been seen or done before. Marketing solutions can assist in storytelling by “hooking” your audience’s interest through awareness. Agencies find it important to have control over their story because that same story can live to be told another day.

Knowing Your Audience

As stated above, agencies can use techniques such as crafting advertisements to the viewer's needs. It is perfectly normal for agencies to use advertisement to get their story out. The main point is to know your audience. Knowing your audience can establish conversation, connection, and engagement between the agencies and its followers. Agencies take time to be comprehensive and understand what the people want in all age demographics, young or elderly. Researching the style of this society is key to crafting and telling your story. Agencies will understand where the audience is coming from to ensure they have an authentic story to tell. Crafting builds a foundation; and that foundation leads your story into other agencies and other people, increasing the populations and demographics the agency is able to reach, to their benefit.

A perfect example of this would be a legend of a modern crafter named Randy Siu. Randy is a co-founder of Modern Craft that helps other agencies and businesses stay focused on trends of the modern world, or in the old ages. Randy helped build this agency to guide agencies on taking the time to learn and build their craftwork though a common change in their structural pattern. Randy says that "We naturally complain about the way things are done. Culture, colleagues, systems, process, services, tools, rules, furniture, décor, and the working environment – these are all things we should be influenced to change" (Siu, 2015).

Randy's concepts concentrate on what the audience needs. Some of the younger audiences are easily persuaded through graphic designs and social media like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat. The other aspects of those that are older, or elderly will be persuaded more on radio, television, and newspaper. What is to be taken away from Randy is

that the use of different forms of advertisement help craft and build your story to reach wider demographics of the public. Organizations love to use advertisement as their crafting skill, so they can tell the stories of success gained because they hooked the audience to what their cause is, raising awareness that develops interest, and eventually knowledge.

Agencies will tend to keep a competitive streak to gain control and have advantage on what they produce. When agencies compete, dominating agencies set trends in the industry that other agencies attempt to replicate to craft a successful story. Agencies that are competitive select their frame to get a world view on things they believe in. In the realm of Brian Clark, he posted a select framework of what competitive agencies can look for. Brian says that “you can frame your story in a way that resonates so strongly an audience that you can enjoy an unfair advantage over your competition” (Clark, 2016). Framing your story provides superior advantages of incorporating an individual spectrum that no other agency can claim. Agencies will compete to grow their strength through crafting and storytelling.

In addition to agencies crafting and telling stories, today agencies are likely to share their story through digital technology. Agencies choose their premise to deliver a framed message to give a more dramatic touch to their work. Digital technology can find the hook of each story angle, to show a difference between a good and bad story. Digital technology such as innovative binary codes can be used to generate value and revenue. This type of work can assist in reaching advertising agency goals.

The most effective strategy that can be used is marketing content. Agencies are known to do this as well in order to craft a successful marketing plan. Content marketing is sharing

materials online to promote a signature brand, or organization. In speaking agencies can craft their work by sharing their material with another provider that may be better than them to get a similar point of view. Content marketing has to be done in order to have a high success rate in overall strategy. Mimicking can be effective in some cases, but it's also called the "lazy move" in the industry to avoid self-criticism.

Agencies should also focus on reaching the unknown majority group. The unknown majority group in the context of crafting and sharing stories is the large quantity of individuals that the agency has never met.

As will be further explained, we all wonder how agencies craft and share their story through different means aside from the practical methods. One available method is for an agency to rely on people getting to know the organization. Building a relationship can further the process of effectively communicating information to the public. Another is by showing the strength of the story through the evolution of the content. Agencies also try to craft and brand a story displaying the detailed goals of how they came to be. The idea of this topic is to expand the thought of creation and see how many generations can be used to perpetuate the information.

As stated above, allow people to know you and what your product means to you and, more importantly, to them. Establish a connection to the people even if you do not agree with some of their politics, or agendas. The world is constantly changing and it is up to the next generation to determine the playing field of how agencies craft and tell stories. In order to craft and share your story, the agency must first understand the core emotions of their audience. Comprehending the style of information that has been currently evolving from every different

aspect is critical. Create a vivid space in your audience's mind, so they can use that to your advantage by telling different people about you (Reese, 2014).

Moreover, showing how strong your story can be can have a big influence to many people, allowing them to have a different perception. Agencies will also create a storyline picking information to use as if they were bad, or not. They will share stories that can be powerful and persuasive making it possible for individuals to resonate with the story. The method of this would be to have your audience recall your story (Reese, 2014).

In addition, agencies will craft and share their story through creating a brand for themselves and their audience. The goal of creating a brand will even out the playing field, showing an understanding of how the world has changed. The key to a successful story will be through having inspiration, demonstrating that there is an educational point of view, and challenging their emotional output resulting in the public getting angry, sad, happy, etc.

The structure of developing a story that agencies use are like outlines of movies. The outlines consist of the following below: (Examples of Nicholas Reese Outline 2014).

- Identity: Finding out who the audience is to have a successful story.
- Turn against the status quo: Crafting and changing the identity through multiple suggestions.
- Struggle: Allowing change in the first batch of information that is given.
- Insight: Gain innovative ideas to build products from different aspects.
- Resolution: Finding what your purpose was for an end goal.

Agencies craft and share their work through credibility and conversing rates to improve their marketing content. Agencies uses others to build their products, and improve their story. The journey to success is achieved by the strength of their craft, and the structure in which their story lies.

When developing information in line with what has been outlined, it is important to understand the audience in the context of the general public, decision makers and power users. These can sections are outlined in the following tables based on the target audience (Census, 2017).

(Place on individual webpage links)

General public	WHO? <i>Who is the audience?</i>	WHAT? <i>What knowledge do you want the audience to have?</i>	HOW? <i>How can you present your data to convince your audience?</i>
<i>Teachers Students News Media Citizens</i>	Community focus	Basic characteristics of their communities and the nation	Focus on major trends and patterns Avoid technical jargon
	Wide range of specialties and education	Notable trends and patterns	Relate content to their communities
	May know little about statistics	Demonstration of the usefulness of censuses, surveys, and official statistics	Use simple visuals to tell a story Create targeted products for Communities

Storytelling Mediums: *blogs, infographics, standalone visuals (maps etc.) physical products (data wheel)*

Decision Makers	WHO? <i>Who is the audience?</i>	WHAT? <i>What knowledge do you want the audience to have?</i>	HOW? <i>How can you present your data to convince your audience?</i>
<i>Senior Executives Politicians Business Leaders</i>	Administrative focus	Indicators for planning and program monitoring	Focus on major trends and patterns Avoid technical jargon
	Generalist Influential Educated	Indicators that may help impact their constituencies or business	Relate content to their business needs Use visuals for important indicators
	Results Oriented	Indicators they can influence through policy or other action	Prepare executive summaries for lengthy technical reports

Storytelling Mediums: reports and briefs, infographics, standalone visuals (maps etc.) physical products (data wheel)

Power Users	WHO? <i>Who is the audience?</i>	WHAT? <i>What knowledge do you want the audience to have?</i>	HOW? <i>How can you present your data to convince your audience?</i>
<i>Academics Researchers Analysts Civil servants</i>	Analytical focus, Specialist	Patterns and trends across multiple indicators and sectors	Include descriptive statistics and use technical jargon if necessary
	Technocratic, Highly educated	Cross-tabulations, Detailed geography, Microdata	Use visuals to highlight patterns that may need further investigation
	Detail oriented	Methodological documentation to improve their analytical capabilities	Provide detailed methodology Provide access to structured data

Storytelling Mediums: reports and briefs, standalone visuals (maps etc.)

There are many ways to craft your work to make it into one comprehensive story. It takes time to realize how a story takes place, it is all there if you learn how to come up with creative solutions and how be on the same level as your audience when it comes to advertising your story. Agencies craft their work that and give life to it, for those who want to listen. Agencies also want world views to look upon to create and market a long lasting extraordinary story.

Practical Applications

Agencies will craft their work with a clear focus with one purpose in mind, and that is to formulate what drives the organization. A post from Harvard Business Review on crafting strategy by Henry Mintzberg says that Steinberg Inc. crafted their work from reorientation, meaning that they focused on changing the direction of the business and told their story through shopping centers and public financing. “An approximate 60 years from its founding to the mid-1970s, and a shift to self-service in 1933” (Mintzberg, 2014).

Therefore, public agencies will use strategic orientation to help craft their work. Crafting relates to changing the style of what you are producing. “Most organizations favor these periods of stability because they achieve success not by changing strategies but exploiting what they have” (Mintzberg, 2014). In meaning, hat public agencies gain their success from not only crafting, but by telling the stories of what they produce. There is always room to improve one’s work, but there are many ways to tell an effective story to sync into the environment it blends in with.

In addition, another agency that has tremendous amount of craftsman would be Apple. Apple is a lucrative company that has been designing software for years and has been maintaining a steady reputation. The Apple Company relates to this topic due to the fact it

manufactures (or crafts) it's work and shares it's innovation with the world. "Sony co-founder Akio Morita influenced Steve Jobs by serving as a base strategy for apple, then moved on to serve overseas with the iPhone and iPod" (Bajarin, 2017). Steve Jobs listened to the story of Akio Morita and began his process of developing a new age platform; he basically used her craftsman skills and sharing techniques to host his very own conferences about his Apple products.

This can be implemented and applied to the public sector by crafting ideas and listening to stories that are shared by other innovators. Incorporating this logic can assist us in gaining a head start on accessing the necessary skills to critically evaluate the message we are bringing forth. This also can be applied by gaining control with recognizing the point of view by making sure the idea that is given is clear to create a specific range of media. Crafting ideas gives you a different output on learning different avenues then you will then use to tell your story.

Propaganda and Public Relations

In the same period that President Roosevelt was conducting Fire Side chats to the more than 28 million Americans who owned a radio, George Orwell broadcast his famous, “The War

prop·a·gan·da
[ˌprəpəˈɡandə]
NOUN

1. Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view.

pub·lic re·la·tions
[ˈpəblik rəˈlāSHənz]
NOUN

1. The professional maintenance of a favorable public image by a company or other organization or a famous person.

of the Worlds.” Based on the content in the broadcast and the subsequent newspaper coverage, many Americans were truly panicked that an alien invasion was taking place (Hobbs & McGee, 2014). This is noted as an important event in the history of communication and raised questions about the public’s ability to differentiate between fiction and nonfiction in media messages. This issue is ever present today with the evolution of communication and media outlets which leads to the topic of distinguishing public relations from propaganda.

A key element of propaganda involves intentionally sharing ideas, concepts or information in a consistent manner

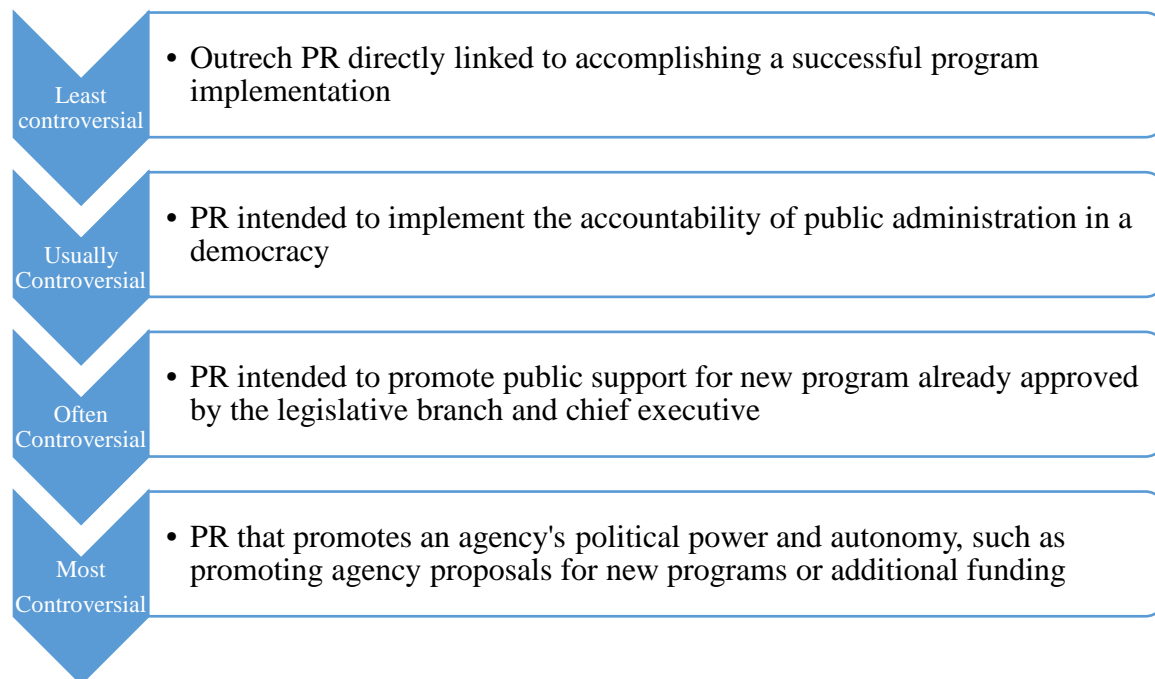
that is aimed at swaying the thoughts of the audience. It is noted that this method of communication can be used to be of benefit or harm to the general public (Hobbs & McGee, 2014). In fact, Edward Bernays, referred to as the father of public relations, did not draw a distinction between public relations and propaganda; he noted that the only difference between propaganda and education is the perspective of the recipient (Hobbs & McGee, 2014).



Figure 2 Retrieved from:
<https://uscupstate.libguides.com/c.php?g=617602&p=4318764>

However, beginning in the 1930's there was a push by educational leaders to identify and resist the concept of propaganda which had become a negative term. The Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) was developed in 1937 and one of the first publications they issued was a list of seven propaganda devices to assist in enabling the public to recognize and resist propaganda which are still recognized today (Hobbs & McGee, 2014).

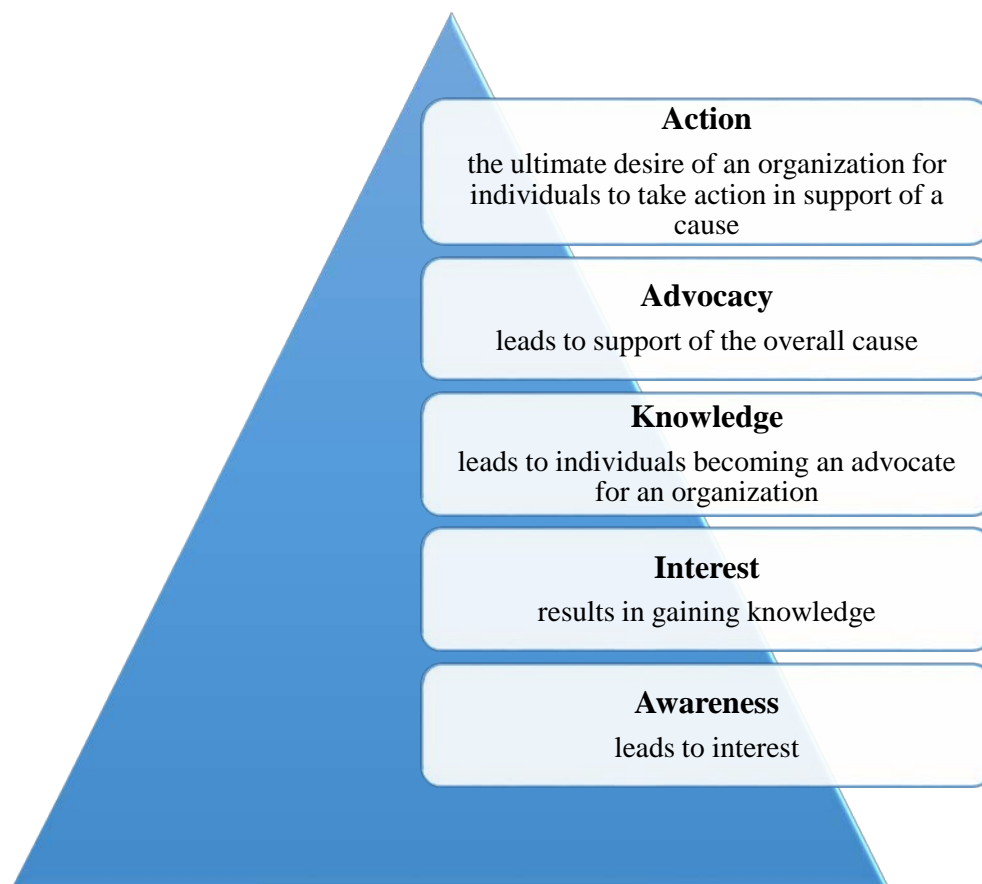
Mordecai Lee suggests that there are numerous lessons be gained from the negative connotation of government communication 1930's and 40's. Based on lessons learned and to provide separation from propaganda, Lee suggests public relations (PR) should be categorized into a rubric from least controversial to highly controversial. The rubric consists of the following categories (Lee, 2012);



The bottom line in his recommendations is to focus specifically on outreach and viewing the agency's services through the eyes of the consumer. Lee does recommend that agency's establish a mantra in the public sector of, "communicate, communicate and then communicate

some more.” (Lee, 2012) This can be as simple as legible infographics and forms, to the detail of providing communications in multiple languages based on demographics (Lee, 2012).

The context of his recommendations are in line with those of McClellan’s pyramid of communication. Lee’s focus of public outreach, generating support, establishing accountability to an informed citizenry, and communication about policy desires is another pyramid of communication (Lee, 2012). As previously outlined, McClellan’s pyramid of communication builds upon itself beginning with awareness (McClellan, 2004);



While there are varying opinions amongst scholars regarding propaganda and public relations, the reality is that society experiences both on a daily basis. Individuals have themselves become media creators and may not even recognize that they are taking part in these activities. The one positive attributed to propaganda is the formation of what is referred to as,

“wisdom of the crowds”. This format essentially promotes in-depth conversations, idea sharing and active listening about issues that are derived from the initial propaganda (Hobbs & McGee, 2014). Despite the positive factor of propaganda noted by Hobbs and Magee, from the perspective of storytelling in the public sector it is important to focus on reaching the general public with facts, but not trying to directly sway their opinion.

Opportunities to Share Your Story

As digital technologies have evolved, the public has increasingly become visual consumers. Here are examples of two great Florida agencies utilizing video capability on their website to connect with the public and achieve effective storytelling, by building the public’s trust through sharing knowledge in a preferred media format.

(These are two YouTube videos that we would like to embed in the website)

Florida Fish and Wildlife

To advocate the importance of Wildlife Management Areas (WRA), the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission produced a video to look back on their notable activities from the previous year. Many constituents may not know the extent of opportunities that WRA’s around the state provide, so highlighting what has been accomplished in the past can serve as a great tool to grow your knowledge base in the future.



Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission

<https://youtu.be/7ZXg0GHj7sw>



Florida Department of Citrus

<https://www.floridacitrus.org/orange-juice-ca/news/grower-anthem/>

Government Success Stories- (direct links to websites)

- **Brevard County Sheriff Wayne Ivey (Brevard 2018)**
 - Sheriff Wayne Ivey has prioritized connecting with all constituencies, including the youth populations in Brevard County through various mediums and sponsorships of community programs and projects. Some of the outreach programs to the youth include the Teen Driver Challenge and the Brevard Attitude Modification (BAM) program.
 - <http://www.brevardsheriff.com/home/>
- **The Villages Community Development District**
 - In an attempt to dispel rumors and communicate directly with residents in a casual environment, a weekly forum was developed that is open to the public. A weekly publication is produced which addresses capital projects, closures and rumors heard by staff. Once staff has presented information, it is an open forum for residents to ask questions and share the latest “stories” they may have heard. The elected officials also regularly attend to listen and understand issues and ideas in the community. For residents unable to attend, the information is published online and available 24/7 or available for pick-up at the Administration office.

- <http://www.districtgov.org/WelcomeWednesday.aspx>



Figure 1<http://www.districtgov.org/WelcomeWednesday.aspx>

Useful information

- **Road Closures/Information**
 - Cities, counties and government agencies around the United States have taken advantage of a GPS mapping program known as Waze. This company in particular offers a free Community Citizens Program for government entities and constituents to interact with the map in real-time to identify capital infrastructure projects and general traffic delays.
 - <https://www.waze.com/ccp>
- **Time Sensitive Information**
 - State/County Emergency Alert Systems
 - Many counties across the state subscribe to the State of Florida emergency alerting system. This system allows messages to be delivered via phone, email

and text in an emergency situation or during inclement weather. Residents are encouraged to sign up for these alerts.



Figure 2 <http://archive.floridadisaster.org/alertflorida/>

<http://archive.floridadisaster.org/alertflorida/>

- **Budget/Capital Project Planning (YouTube Video)**

- The City of Wellington, Florida developed a YouTube video to highlight their FY 2017-2018 Budget initiatives. This information provides an interactive presentation of information in addition to their Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports.

- https://youtu.be/dR2q_npjW7Y

- **Tax increases (Interactive Website)**

- Following the approval of a half-cent sales tax in 2016, Marion County, Florida developed a website to highlight what the tax supports. The approval of the tax was to specifically fund non-recurring public safety and infrastructure costs. This website allows residents to see exactly how the tax money is being allocated.

- <https://www.marionsalestax.org/>

Conclusion

The thing people should learn is to be innovative; if you have your own organization and you need ideas to craft, listen to the stories of those that have succeeded in their work. Never shy away from what is important even if it takes a while to grasp. The message here is to take what is given and build on what you have and provide new information for another individual, or agency to use. Never be limited to what someone is sharing with you. Craft and build your organization and live to tell another story for the next generation. The last thing to take away from this is to believe in what you do and what you hear. Just as Steve Jobs crafted the Apple brand and products, government agencies and public administrators must craft their brand and products with trust and confidence for the constituencies they serve.

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